

# Statistics for Criminal Justice Using Excel *An Introduction*

Allen Lowery  
Patricia Lowery



CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  

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Durham, North Carolina

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lowery, Allen.

Statistics for criminal justice using Excel : an introduction / Allen Lowery and Patricia Francis Lowery.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-61163-387-0 (alk. paper)

1. Criminal statistics--Data processing. 2. Criminal justice, Administration of--Statistical methods. 3. Microsoft Excel (Computer file) I. Lowery, Patricia Francis. II. Title.

HV7415.L69 2013  
364.0285'554--dc23

2013011068

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS  
700 Kent Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27701  
Telephone (919) 489-7486  
Fax (919) 493-5668  
[www.cap-press.com](http://www.cap-press.com)

Printed in the United States of America

# Contents

*Note: All chapter exercises are collected at the end of the book  
(as opposed to the end of each chapter).*

<b>Introduction</b>	ix
<b>Chapter One · The Basics: Inferential and Descriptive Statistics</b>	3
Levels of Measurement	4
Mean of Population and Sample	6
Median	8
Mode	9
Mean, Median, Mode, and More with Excel	10
<b>Chapter Two · Developing Frequency Distributions</b>	15
Absolute Frequency Distribution	15
Absolute and Relative Frequency Distribution	17
Absolute, Relative, and Cumulative Frequency Distribution	18
Absolute, Relative, Cumulative, and Cumulative Relative Frequency Distribution	19
Interval Frequency Distributions	21
<b>Chapter Three · Understanding Variability</b>	23
Range	24
Variance	24
Standard Deviation	25
Standard Deviation and Grouped Data	28
Z Scores	30
Standard Normal Curve	32
<b>Chapter Four · Comparative Statistics</b>	35
Crime Rates and the Presentation of Other Similar Data	35

Crime-Specific and Other-Specific Rates	36
Percentage of Change	37
Trend Analysis	38
<b>Chapter Five · Exploring the Relationship Between Nominal Variables</b>	<b>41</b>
Statistical Relationships	41
Dependent Variable	41
Independent Variable	42
Contingency Table (2X2)	42
Hypothesis Testing and Statistical Significance	45
The Chi-Square Test	47
The Phi Coefficient	52
Cramér Coefficient V	53
<b>Chapter Six · Learning How to Make Use of Correlations</b>	<b>57</b>
Correlation	57
How to Plot Data	57
Covariation	60
Pearson Product-Moment Correlation	63
Pearson Product-Moment as a Measure of Association	67
Testing for the Statistical Significance of $r$	69
Using Excel to Compute Our $r$	70
<b>Chapter Seven · Making Application of Simple Linear Regression</b>	<b>73</b>
The Basics and the Terminology	73
Linear Regression	78
Determining the Accuracy of Our Prediction	80
Using Excel to Perform a Regression	85
<b>Chapter Eight · Multiple Regression Analysis</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Chapter Nine · Hypothesis Testing and the t Test</b>	<b>99</b>
How the Z Score Fits In	100
Sampling with Replacement	101
Sampling Distribution of the Mean	101
The Central Limits Theorem	103
Degrees of Freedom	104
Non-Directional and Directional Testing	104
Independent and Related Samples	105

<b>Chapter Ten · One-Way Analysis of Variance</b>	111
Type I and Type II Error	111
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)	112
Level of Significance and the Decision Rule	116
Post Hoc Testing	117
<b>Chapter Exercises</b>	121
Chapter One	122
Exercise #1	122
Exercise #2	122
Exercise #3	122
Chapter Two	123
Exercise #1	123
Exercise #2	124
Chapter Three	125
Exercise #1	125
Exercise #2	125
Exercise #3	125
Exercise #4	125
Exercise #5	126
Chapter Five	127
Exercise #1	127
Exercise #2	127
Chapter Six	128
Exercise #1	128
Exercise #2	128
Chapter Seven	129
Exercise	129
Chapter Eight	130
Exercise	130
Chapter Nine	131
Exercise	131
Chapter Ten	132
Exercise	132
<b>Chapter Exercise Solutions</b>	133
Chapter One	133
Exercise #1	133
Exercise #2	133

Exercise #3	133
Chapter Two	134
Exercise #1	134
Exercise #2	134
Chapter Three	135
Exercise #1	135
Exercise #2	135
Exercise #3	135
Z-score Exercise #4	136
Z-score Exercise #5	137
Chapter Five	138
Exercise #1	138
Exercise #2	138
Chapter Six	139
Exercise #1	139
Exercise #2	139
Chapter Seven	140
Simple Regression, Exercise #1	140
Chapter Eight	141
Multiple Regression, Exercise #1	141
Chapter Nine	143
t-Test Assuming Equal Variance, Exercise #1	143
Chapter Ten	144
ANOVA, Single Factor, Exercise #1	144
<b>Tables and Charts</b>	<b>145</b>
Areas Beneath the Normal Curve	146
t Values Needed for Rejection of the Null Hypothesis	148
Critical Values for Analysis of Variance or F Test	151
Values of the Correlation Coefficient Needed for Rejection of the Null Hypothesis	157
Critical Values for the Chi-Square Test	158
<b>Index</b>	<b>159</b>

# Introduction

Most people, to include those who are professionals in the field of criminal justice, have a rather large misgiving, perhaps even a fear, of statistics. Often, this fear is seated in a course that was taken years ago, either in high school or while working on an undergraduate (and in some cases a graduate) degree. Very knowledgeable men and women who are teaching statistical courses at colleges and universities make assumptions as to the level of understanding held by the students entering their classes. Often, these assumptions are wrong.

According to many students and colleagues, the stories about statistics courses are the same over the years. Students have passed statistical classes by parroting techniques, but did not really understand. Students ask in-class questions concerning statistical problems, only to be told, “Oh, you should know that.” Too often, students have gone to the office of the professor only to leave more confused than they were when they went in.

Students do have a responsibility to prepare themselves and spend an appropriate amount of time studying and practicing. However, fear of the subject matter, and a certain lack of understanding, may combine to cause the student to approach a course in statistical analysis with a certain amount of dread.

Controlling the fear of statistics depends upon two things. First, the student must realize that if he or she can add, subtract, multiply, and divide, they already possess the basic skills necessary to perform statistical calculations. Secondly, the student must take the time to learn the terminology and how to read the statistical formulas. Once this has been accomplished, the mystery of statistical analysis unravels and the sense of dread is replaced with a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment.

This text has been specifically written with criminal justice professionals and the practical application of statistical processes to criminal justice needs

in mind. All examples and exercises have been designed with a criminal justice flavor. The statistical processes reviewed in this text are those most likely to be applied by those working in the criminal justice field. Higher, more complicated techniques are not as likely to be undertaken by most criminal justice professionals in their normal course of duty and have been reserved for later texts.